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Articles in Today's Clips Thursday, October 11, 2007

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New DHS director faces some uncomfortable questions but passes confirmation hearing

by: **Kevin Shopshire**

Tuesday (10/09) at 23:36 PM



LANSING - Ismael Ahmed, Gov. Jennifer Granholm's nominee to be the new head of the massive and troubled Department of Human Services (DHS), faced some tough questions at his **confirmation hearing** Tuesday before the Senate's Families and Human Services Committee, but some 30 supporters from state Senators and Representative to colleagues and friends spoke in support of him.

Following an almost four-hour hearing the Committee unanimously recommended the Senate Government Operations and Reform Committee appoint Ahmed as the head of the DHS.

Debbie Schlusell - a conservative political commentator, radio talk show host, columnist and attorney who has public accused Ahmed of wrongdoing in the past - made an appearance and accused him of Medicaid fraud, supporting terrorism and supporting anti-American and anti-Israel

activities. She had to be gaveled off after going well beyond the 5 minutes for public testimony allowed by the chair of the Committee, Sen. Mark Jansen, R-Grand Rapids.

"We have heard a lot about bridge-building," Schlusell said. "You know you have heard a lot of people who support him come up here who say they are Jewish, but they don't represent any official Jewish organization."

Ahmed is the executive director and founder of the **Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)**, a private nonprofit agency that grew from a storefront operation that helped just about 125 people in 1971 to an agency with a \$15-million budget that helps some 90,000 people a year. But following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks Arab-Americans were under a cloud of suspicion. Jansen, the chair of the committee, asked Ahmed about a 2002 raid on ACCESS authorized by then Attorney General Jennifer Granholm in an investigation of Medicare fraud.

"We opened all the files they requested," Ahmed said. "We cooperated fully. Many people have been prosecuted because of this, but no one connected with ACCESS was involved."

Continued -

Kevin Shopshire :: New DHS director faces some uncomfortable questions but passes confirmation hearing

Ahmed said the investigation took a close look at one supervisor among the 200 employees at ACCESS, but the supervisor was relieved of his duties until they were cleared by the investigation.

In 2002 when Ahmed ran as the Democratic nominee to the Board of Regents for the University of Michigan he was accused by Schlusell as being friendly to Arab terrorist groups and committing Medicaid fraud.

"I know there is a blogger out there who would like to tie all of that good work to terrorist groups and Medicaid fraud, but it's simply not true," Ahmed said. "As an American born in this country and a veteran I am offended but not surprised because false accusations will always find an audience."

But person after person came forward to tell the committee that Ahmed was a man of character, a bridge-builder of all races and a man of integrity. Jansen also said he had more than 30 letters and emails in support of Ahmed.

"He is both compassionate and a visionary leader who moves organizations forward," said Sue Hamilton, the director of Health and Human Services for Wayne Country.

When asked by the committee for examples of major changes at ACCESS he has overseen in the past, Ahmed said ACCESS went through some major changes following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. He said ACCESS no longer supports any overseas charities or activities except the Red Cross and through the U.S. State Department.

"After Sept. 11 the world changed for Arab-Americans, as it did for all Americans," he said. "After that we were under much more federal scrutiny."

The DHS has been under fire for its handling of the Ricky Holland case, the 7-year-old Williamston boy who was murdered by his adoptive parents in July 2005 after the parental rights of his biological parents were terminated by DHS. That was a question the committee asked him both in person and in [writing](#). Ahmed has been acting director since he was appointed last month, pending the confirmation hearing.

"I have only been here for three weeks, but I have asked that every death or near death instantly be brought to my attention and an investigation begun," he said.

Tags: [Debbie Schlussel](#), [Department of Human Services](#), [Ismael Ahmed](#), [Ricky Holland](#), [Sen. Mark Jansen](#), ([All Tags](#))

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Article published Oct 11, 2007
Rizzo trial moved to Oct. 23
Times Herald

The trial of Anthony Rizzo, a Clay Township man charged with killing his then-girlfriend's 11-month-old daughter, has been moved from Oct. 2 to Oct. 23.

The trial will begin at 2 p.m. Oct. 23 in Macomb County Circuit Court.

Macomb County Assistant Prosecutor Steve Kaplan said the trial date was changed because of a request from the defense.

Rizzo is accused of causing the death of Kala Faye Kacarka, by hitting her while she sat in a car seat. Kala's mother, Tracey Ann Kuhr, was inside a Washington Township drug store when police said the incident happened.

Rizzo was arrested on July 9, 2003 on an outstanding felony warrant.

For more news and information, pick up Friday's *Times Herald*.

Mother's mental health questioned

By Matt Whetstone, Cadillac News

LAKE CITY — "Inexplicable," accountant Bob Beattie said when asked about his colleague, Amy Sue Musselman, shooting her daughter.

Amy Musselman's murder trial was handed over to defense attorney Bill Barnett Wednesday following morning testimony from two prosecution witnesses. Barnett focused on family members, co-workers, colleagues — such as Beattie — and friends to give insight in the year prior to Sept. 13, 2006, when the prosecution says Amy Musselman shot and killed her 7-year-old daughter.

By the time police arrived, Alyssa Paige Musselman was cold to the touch, prosecution witness and former Missaukee County Undersheriff Ed Nettle testified.

Nettle spoke with Amy Musselman for a brief period. He got no response.

"During that interview, her demeanor was stone — like a statue," Nettle said. "I don't know if she understood what was going on."

That's the same assessment defense witnesses gave when asked about her attitude, appearance and social skills up to a year prior to Alyssa's death.

After Missaukee County Prosecutor Bill Donnelly called Nettle and Amy Musselman's husband, Frank, to the stand, he rested his case.

Barnett then motioned 28th Circuit Court Judge Bill Fagerman for a directed verdict, seeking charges less than murder.

Fagerman said there was overwhelming evidence to support the prosecution's case that Amy Musselman murdered her daughter and her actions were premeditated. He denied the motion.

"That took some thought, that took some planning," Fagerman said of Amy Musselman's actions.

He cited testimony from Frank Musselman, who said a few days before Alyssa's death, Amy Musselman shot and killed a dog and a cat with the only gun in the family's house, a .22 rifle. When Frank questioned her about the dead dog, Amy did not answer.

Frank pressed.

Amy confessed.

"She said it as if she was protecting the children," Frank said. "It took a lot of pushing to get that out of her."

Believing something worse could happen, Frank Musselman placed the gun behind the seat of his pickup truck. He intended to take it to work with him the next day. Amy Musselman tried to stop him, saying she needed it for protection.

"I remember saying, 'If you're not careful, you're going to shoot the Schwan's man,'" Frank Musselman testified.

After that verbal exchange in September, Frank Musselman went to bed. He awoke during the night, went into the kitchen and discovered that Amy Musselman had taken the .22 shells from the bedroom. Frank Musselman didn't know it at the time but she also removed the rifle from his unlocked truck.

Before leaving for work the next morning, Frank told his wife he was going to purchase some mace. He also said they could begin locking the back door during the day because Amy was concerned people were prowling in the yard.

She heard talking outside, Frank Musselman testified.

Frank Musselman broke down just once while on the stand. Amy Musselman, sitting a few feet away wearing black pants, a purple shirt and handcuffs, wiped her eyes and blew her nose several times. Throughout much of Wednesday's proceedings, she sat motionless, her hands folded in front of her face.

"I never felt those kids were in harm's way, ever," Frank Musselman said.

Following a lunch break, Barnett recalled Frank Musselman to the stand and began asking questions about Amy Musselman's mental state. It was a theme throughout the afternoon as Barnett called nine more witnesses.

The last witness of the day was Amy Musselman's sister, Michelle Geiger. Geiger, the youngest of four girls, became very close to Amy after high school. They worked together at what would become Piranha Hose Products. Alyssa and Geiger's twin daughters were great friends.

The first signs of mental stress began in 2004, shortly after Amy Musselman's son was born. While he was at a day care facility at which Geiger worked, he experienced some seizure-like convulsions. Amy feared for her son and soon withdrew him.

After working at the day care for about a year, Geiger hired back into Piranha in an entry level position. Amy was her boss.

In early 2005, Geiger testified that she, Amy and some other co-workers had lunch together. Amy Musselman said the company was on the verge of an ownership change.

Beattie, who served as an accountant for Piranha, said the transition period was very stressful on Amy Musselman. Since she was in the center of the sale, he said it was not unusual that she displayed a high level of stress.

Geiger said Amy was concerned that the sale could jeopardize her career at a company where she had risen to the level of upper management.

Former co-workers Heather Corner and Leslie Nowlin testified that Amy Musselman's attitude at work began to change drastically.

Nowlin said she would often see Amy Musselman picking her son up at day care. After her termination, Nowlin said Amy Musselman would "look right through her," like Nowlin wasn't even there.

Amy Musselman's oldest sister, Andrea Manchip, testified earlier in the day called Amy's job her "identity."

Through hard work, Amy Musselman "created that identity for herself," Manchip said. "When she lost her job, she lost her identity."

In the months that followed, Amy Musselman became more despondent. She stopped communicating and would often greet questions with silence.

Friends and family said she stopped caring about her looks, she lost weight and was less strict with her children.

But Manchip, who works with mentally ill patients, said Amy Musselman "never stopped going through the motions." Manchip said it's when someone stops going through the motions that serious help is needed.

Amy Musselman's father, Marvin Bolles, said at a December 2005 Christmas party, Amy Musselman had very little interaction with people.

"She went downhill from there," Bolles said.

"When you talk to a person, you look them in the eyes," Bolles would later say. "There was nothing there."

Family members testified how at several family functions in 2006, Amy Musselman spoke very little. She often left early.

Family members tried to get Amy help.

The week Amy Musselman lost her job, Geiger ended up taking her to the emergency room at Mercy Hospital. A doctor gave her a shot to help her sleep and some pills. He told Geiger to schedule a follow-up appointment with her primary physician.

After an initial appointment, Geiger made a second appointment at Great Lakes Family Care. Amy's concern that she was in possession of counterfeit \$10 bills prompted the call.

Meanwhile, Amy Musselman had another job interview. Family members and Frank Musselman testified that they believed if she got back to work, it would improve her condition. She was eventually hired but things didn't change.

Prior to another appointment, Amy Musselman told Geiger that she believed tubes that had been inserted in her son's ears were being used to listen to her.

At an appointment with Dr. Lori Crago, Geiger broke down. She revealed the comment Amy made about the "transponders" and then looked at Amy.

Without saying a word, Amy Musselman shed a few tears, Geiger said. The doctor then asked if Geiger thought her sister was "going crazy." Geiger said, "Yes."

Crago referred Amy Musselman to a psychologist. The appointment was not kept.

Amy Musselman's longtime friend, Nicole Colecchio-Frever, testified how Amy believed someone had tampered with her personal bank account and that people were trying to harm her children. Her conversation was scattered, jumping from topics without warning, Colecchio-Frever said.

When they talked on the phone, the slightest background noise would cause Amy to hang up.

On one day in particular, Amy Musselman contacted Colecchio-Frever. She said the police were on the way to the house and she wanted her to come as well.

When Colecchio-Frever arrived, Amy Musselman was speaking to the officer about the \$10 bills.

"She looked like hell," she testified.

After speaking to police Amy's son sprayed her with a garden hose. Colecchio-Frever said there was no response from Amy.

Just days before her death, Alyssa attended a birthday party at Geiger's house. Alyssa acted normal at the party. Witnesses testified throughout the day that they did not believe the children were affected by Amy's mental state.

The day after the party Amy did not call about picking up Alyssa.

On Monday, Sept. 11, 2006, Amy skipped work and kept the kids home from school. Amy showed up at her father's house and the kids ate McDonald's Happy Meals.

When asked why the children were not in school, Amy Musselman responded that she just took the day off.

"There was no jolly feeling, there was no smile, at least on her part," Bolles said. "That's the last time I saw Alyssa alive."

On Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2006, Amy Musselman fought with her husband to keep the .22 in the house.

On Sept. 13, 2006, Alyssa Musselman was shot six times.

A few weeks later, Geiger got a call from Munson Hospital in Traverse City. Amy Musselman requested her presence.

"She asked me, after she apologized, if there was anyone at the funeral that I didn't know," Geiger said.

Geiger said the apology was generic.

After testimony, Barnett submitted 11 pieces of evidence, including numerous psychological evaluations.

Just after 3 p.m. Wednesday, the attorneys rested their case. The proceedings are scheduled to reconvene at 1 p.m. today in 28th Circuit Court in Lake City with closing arguments.

Editors Note

This is the second day of coverage of murder trial of Amy Sue Musselman and we wanted to let readers know that we have struggled with how to present the information brought up during the trial.

We want to accurately portray the events of the trial and still remain sensitive to the graphic nature of the testimony. We have chosen not to publish much of the graphic detail that has been presented.

Please call us at (231) 775-NEWS (6397) with your feedback.



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Children removed after bust

Thursday, October 11, 2007

BY REX HALL JR.

rhall@kalamazoogazette.com

388-7784

STURGIS -- A police officer and a child-services worker visiting an Ellerman Street residence Wednesday for truancy issues and reports of unsanitary conditions found components of a methamphetamine lab, authorities said.

Three children were taken from the house about noon after the components were found, and two people, a 45-year-old man and a 19-year-old Sturgis resident, were arrested in connection with the discovery, according to the Sturgis Police Department.

Police said the 25-year-old mother of the three children arrived home later and was arrested. Authorities allege she had additional meth-making components.

She and the 45-year-old were taken to the St. Joseph County Jail and were each lodged on a charge of manufacturing and using amphetamine, a news release said. The other suspect was jailed on a charge of frequenting a drug house, police said.

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Plea made in sex case

Thursday, October 11, 2007

GRAND RAPIDS -- Investigators at this time say there are no other victims involved in the case of a former child care center worker who pleaded guilty this week to sexually assaulting a 4-year-old girl. Matthew Eggleston, 25, pleaded guilty to first-degree criminal sexual conduct in exchange for prosecutors dropping another charge and recommending a jail sentence of five to 15 years. Eggleston worked with 3- and 4-year-olds in a pre-kindergarten program, according to officials at Milestones Child Development Center, 5070 Cascade Road SE.

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Man who filmed himself having sex with girl pleads guilty

By Christy Strawser
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A 44-year-old Ray Township man pleaded guilty to pornography charges Wednesday after investigators said he filmed himself having sex with a former girlfriend's 9-year-old daughter.

Leo Joseph Rudolph pleaded guilty before Judge David Lawson in federal district court to one count each of manufacturing child pornography, transporting child pornography, receiving child pornography, and possessing child pornography.

Investigators said from January to May, Rudolph "used, enticed, and otherwise coerced" the 9-year-old to engage in sex acts while he photographed and videotaped it.

Rudolph then distributed the images over the Internet, investigators said.

The investigation was begun in January, by agents in Portland, Ore., after they received tips about a girl whose image was being distributed on the Internet, said Greg Palmore, a spokesman for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Agents tracked it to Rudolph and June 15, they executed a federal search warrant at his house in Ray Township where they seized a laptop computer, digital camera, and several other pieces of digital media.

A computer forensic analysis discovered more than 600 images of children, including the victim, engaged in explicit sexual conduct, Palmore said.

Rudolph was arrested at Detroit Metropolitan Airport later the same day as he returned on a flight from Orlando, Fla.

Rudolph faces 15 to 30 years in prison at his sentencing scheduled for 11 a.m. Jan. 28.

"All children have an absolute right to grow up free from the fear of being sexually exploited," said Brian Moskowitz, special agent in charge of the immigration and customs, or ICE, Office of Investigations in Detroit. "And children should never have to fear those who are supposed to protect them."

The Rudolph investigation was part of Operation Predator, a nationwide initiative headed by the immigration and customs office to protect children from sexual predators, including those who travel overseas for sex with minors. ICE agents have arrested more than 10,000 people, including more than 250 in Michigan, since it launched in 2003.

ICE encourages the public to report suspected child predators -- and any suspicious activity -- through its 24-hour toll-free hot line at (866) DHS-2-ICE.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/101107/loc_porn001.shtml

Detroit Free Press

Macomb County news briefs

October 11, 2007

COUNTYWIDE: FBI reviews death of prosecutor

The FBI is investigating the death of a federal prosecutor from Florida who apparently killed himself Friday at a federal prison in Milan after being accused of coming to Michigan to have sex with a 5-year-old girl.

Authorities described the investigation of the death of J.D. Roy Atchison, 53, of Gulf Breeze as routine.

Meanwhile, authorities provided more details about Atchison's death. They said he hanged himself from a showerhead with a knotted sheet that he picked up from the floor near a common shower area. He did not hang himself from a shower in his cell as previously reported.

Prisoners had used folded sheets like bath mats so they could dry off without standing in a puddle after showering, officials said.

The U.S. Bureau of Prisons has provided few details about the death, ruled a suicide by the Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office. Atchison, who had tried to kill himself two weeks earlier, was on a suicide watch. It remains unclear why he had access to the sheet or why he was unattended.

RAY TOWNSHIP: Man could get up to 30 years in pornography case

A 44-year-old Ray Township man pleaded guilty Wednesday to federal charges of manufacturing and distributing child pornography.

Leo Joseph Rudolph, who pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge David Lawson in Detroit, faces 15 to 30 years in prison at a sentencing scheduled for Jan. 28.

Officials said in court documents that Rudolph coerced the 9-year-old daughter of a woman he was dating to engage in sex acts with him, which he photographed and distributed on the Internet.

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Web site offers information, in event of dating violence

by DAVID SALISBURY
Capital News Service

The state has launched a Web site for teenage victims of sexual assault that consolidates resources across Michigan's 83 counties.

The Teen Dating Violence site covers teenager's dating rights, definitions of stalking and stories of victims. It also includes a link to the state resource directory and phone numbers for national hotlines and crisis centers.

The YWCA West Michigan Center in Grand Rapids is one such link for women and girls in need of assistance, providing rape exams, forensics and support counseling.

President Carla Blinkhorn said Web sites like these are essential, not only to help victims, but also to prevent future victims.

Blinkhorn said it is important to provide information to girls from the age of 11 on, adding that 70 percent of assaulted victims at her center are under 24.

"Young people use the Web, so that's where we need to reach them," she said.

The site includes information for friends of victims about how to respond appropriately to news of a sexual assault.

"Teenagers typically talk to their friends first and don't go to teachers or parents when they're being violated," said Sarah Heuser, prevention and education director of the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence in Okemos.

"One of the main goals for the site is to teach fellow teens how to properly aid one another in times like these," she said.

The Department of Human Services launched the site in October because it's the state's Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Gov. Jennifer Granholm said the designation is intended to promote organizations and individuals who provide advocacy efforts and services.

Heuser said, "Having a month dedicated to the issue is important because it increases opportunities to reach women in need."

The site includes definitions of domestic crimes and physical, emotional and psychological abuse.

Heuser said that by arming young people with background information and preventative measures, it could also reduce sexual abuse of adults.

The FBI's 2005 Uniform Crime Report indicates that in

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the 1,342 known "intimate partner homicides" in the nation, 79 percent of the victims were female.

In 2005, there were 58 intimate partner homicides and more than 70,000 cases of domestic violence, according to a State Police report.

"Statistics of domestic violence in Michigan are consistent with national numbers," said Colleen Simon, communications director for the Michigan coalition.

"When people know that help is available, they're more likely to seek help and perhaps some of those numbers will go down," she said.

EVE Inc. is another one of the state's organizations listed on the new Web site.

Located in Lansing, it's one of Ingham County's main domestic violence shelters and assistance providers. Last year, 417 women and children found shelter and 932 people called its crisis line.

"Sometimes people in need don't know where to find help," said Jillian Pastoor, communications coordinator for EVE. "Sites like these are essential to women who are looking for new options."

EVE helps women and children of all ages and financial brackets with medical and financial needs, legal aid, housing and transportation services, counseling and personal protection programs.

"We're not the only such organization," Pastoor said. "We want women to know that there is help and that no one needs to put up with unhealthy situations."

The Teen Dating Violence site is www.michigan.gov/datingviolence

For more information on EVE Inc., go to www.eveinc.org or call its hotline at (517) 372-5572. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is (800) 799-SAFE.

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10/11/2007

People speak out against domestic violence at rally

By [Angela E. Lackey](#)



Daily News/Ryan Wood

Members of the community, local judges and law enforcement representatives take a moment to reflect on those affected by domestic violence during a rally at the Midland County Courthouse Wednesday. Shelterhouse sponsored the event to raise awareness of the programs and organizations that are working to eliminate domestic violence in the area. During the rally, leaves were placed on a tree to represent the 54 people in Michigan who lost their lives last year due to domestic violence.

A small group of people gathered on a cold and windy day to remember the victims of domestic violence and support those who were able to break the chain of violence.

"Please believe in us until we believe in ourselves," said Michelle, a survivor of domestic violence. She asked that her last name not be used for safety reasons.

The Wednesday noon rally was held by the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (Shelterhouse) on the front steps of the Midland County Courthouse. October is Domestic Violence Month.

"We all believe that everyone deserves a life free of violence," said Shelterhouse Executive Director Sharon Mortensen.

To one side of the steps were four large cutouts -- a man, a woman and two children -- painted black. Facts about domestic violence, including that the violence escalates in both severity and frequency over time, were attached to the cutouts.

"Your intent for us is to be whole and in peace," prayed the Rev. Dr. Nancy Young.

Peace was a long time coming for Michelle. She was raised in an abusive home and learned early that violence was always nearby.

"After he was done hitting us and beating us, he told us he loved us," she said of

Advertisement

her father.

"We tried to be perfect. We tried not to be bad," she continued. "(But) our very spirits were being crushed."

Michelle said like many women growing up in that environment, she was attracted to the same type of man as her father. She believed that the best she deserved was a man who abused her -- until she had children.

"I knew I had to leave this monster for them," she said.

Michelle did not want her girls to grow up believing they deserved to be abused. She did not want her sons to grow up thinking that hitting was the answer.

"My abuser told me he would kill me if I left," she said. "I was already dead. What did I have to lose?"

Michelle did leave, and learned unconditional caring at Shelterhouse. She began to think she was worthy of love that didn't hurt. She went on to college, and one of her proudest moments was when she walked down the graduation aisle with her children watching.

"I was so proud to show my kids they could do anything," she said.

Michelle's story could have ended differently. The men and women who work in the legal system see the ravages of domestic violence every day.

District Court Judge John Hart related a recent case involving an unmarried couple. They were sitting around a bonfire and the boyfriend had a few beers. He then took his girlfriend's kittens and threw each one into the fire. She was forced to watch as each kitten burned to death. The message? Make me angry and this is what could happen to you.

"The case still makes me sick," Hart said.

Chief James St. Louis of the Midland Police Department said almost 4 million women are beaten by their male partners each year. It's about power and control, and no excuse -- drugs, alcohol or anything -- justifies it.

St. Louis said 242 domestic violence cases were prosecuted in Midland County in 2006. The number seems to be increasing -- between Jan. 1 and Wednesday, 236 domestic violence cases had been prosecuted. St. Louis said that number does not include the many cases that are not reported.

Domestic violence can hurt and even kill those who are called to help. Midland County Sheriff Jerry Nielsen said domestic violence calls are the number one reason law enforcement officers are injured or killed on the job. Law enforcement officers go in pairs to these calls for that reason.

District Court Judge Steve Carras stressed how domestic violence affects the entire family, saying children who live in violence learn violence.

But, he added, it's not easy for a victim to leave the abuser. The abuser is often the financial provider and the victim is left asking, "What do I do now?"

That's where Shelterhouse comes in. The agency provides housing for domestic violence victims and their children, helps them through the sometimes confusing legal system, assists in filing personal protection orders against abusers and more.

For more information on Shelterhouse's domestic violence services, call (989) 835-6771.

Photos taken by Daily News photographers are available as [reprints](#).

A vertical graphic with a red top section, a white middle section, and a blue bottom section. The red section contains the text "Midland County Emergency Information". The white section contains the text "1-888-TELL-MORE" in large red letters, with "(1-888-835-5667)" in smaller red letters below it. The blue section contains the text "Or Tune To:" in white, followed by "MGTV Charter Cable Channel 5" and "or WMPX AM 1490 WMRX FM 97.7" in white. The bottom of the graphic has a red section with the website "www.co.midland.mi.us/emergency" in white.

A purple rounded rectangular banner. The text "Simmons Specific Chiropractic" is in a large, stylized red font. Below it, in a smaller white font, is "5108 Eastman, Suite 1, Midland" followed by "Call (989) 923-BACK".

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Granholm wants votes in overriding insurance veto

October 11, 2007

BY KATHY BARKS HOFFMAN

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LANSING -- Gov. Jennifer Granholm wants more of Michigan's congressional delegation to help override President George W. Bush's veto of a bill to expand health care coverage to more children.

She's urging people to call Republican U.S. Reps. Mike Rogers of Brighton, Tim Walberg of Tipton, Joe Knollenberg of Bloomfield Hills and Pete Hoekstra of Holland and ask them to support the override.

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The State Children's Health Insurance Program targets children whose families earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to buy health coverage.

Bush says adding \$35 billion to the program over five years is too expensive. Granholm says the extra dollars would let 80,000 more Michigan children get health coverage in addition to the 55,000 now covered by the program.

"Those who would vote against it are voting against insuring 80,000 uninsured children in Michigan. And that is a travesty," she told reporters Wednesday.

But Rogers put out his own statement saying the bill goes too far and doesn't keep the money from being spent to cover illegal immigrants or families with moderately high incomes who might drop their private health insurance to get government coverage for free.

"The governor ought to be helping us negotiate a bill that focuses on providing for the critical health needs of Michigan's poor children," Rogers said.

Walberg also criticized the bill, but said he has cosponsored a measure that would extend the current program for 18 months.

"The legislation I have supported would ensure that the children's health program is available for children who need it, and not for adults, people who enter the country illegally or families who already have private insurance," he said in a release.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees began broadcasting ads this week trying to pressure an override vote from Walberg and Knollenberg, along with six others targeted by the ads. An override vote is supposed to take place Oct. 18.

Granholm noted that the other three Republicans from Michigan -- U.S. Reps. Vernon Ehlers of Grand Rapids, Fred Upton of St. Joseph and Candice Miller of Macomb County's Harrison Township -- voted for the bill expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program before Bush vetoed it. Michigan's Democratic congressional members also support the bill.

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Push to override SCHIP veto gains support

Vote expected on Oct. 18; Gov. favors health care program

Chris Andrews
Lansing State Journal

State and local health leaders joined Gov. Jennifer Granholm Wednesday in urging mid-Michigan members of Congress to override President Bush's veto of legislation to expand a children's health program.

Granholm said the expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program could provide health coverage to more than 80,000 additional Michigan children.

A vote on the veto override is expected on Oct. 18. U.S. Reps. Mike Rogers, R-Brighton, and Tim Walberg, R-Tipton, have both indicated they will support Bush.

"This bill addresses Michigan's ability to have a safety net for the families who are struggling," Granholm said in the meeting at the Ingham County Health Department. "Who are we if we cannot prioritize health care for children in low-income families?"

At issue is insurance for children in working families who are ineligible for Medicaid.

The State Children's Health Insurance Program provides health care for children if the family income is up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

That's about \$41,000 for a family of four.

Michigan's program, known as MICHild, insures about 55,000 Michigan children.

Granholm said an additional 80,000 children could be covered under the \$35 billion expansion approved by Congress. But Bush vetoed the bill.

MIChild has been vital to Dianna Blevins, a Lansing resident who adopted her grandson, who has ADHD and epilepsy and wears hearing aids and glasses.

"I couldn't buy his prescription drugs without that insurance," she said.

"There's no way I could afford private insurance," Blevins said.

Neither Rogers nor Walberg appear likely to be swayed.

"Last week, the governor raised income taxes on every Michigan family by 12 percent and added a new 6 percent tax on services; then this week she wants Congress to spend \$6.5 billion on illegal immigrants, to subsidize families making more than \$83,000, and push families out of private health coverage and into a taxpayer-funded program," Rogers said in a statement.

Granholm said the bill doesn't raise income limits and gives the Bush administration the discretion to turn down such requests by the states.

The Bush administration turned down New York's request to set an \$83,000 limit.

Granholm said there are provisions that prevent working families from switching from private health care into SCHIP programs.

Walberg said he supports renewing the existing program but said he objects to provisions in the bill that cover adults, people entering the country illegal and families with high income.

U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, said the debate is over the basic values of the country.

"This is about supporting work and working families who are trying to keep it together," she said.

Contact Chris Andrews at 377-1054 or candrews@lsj.com.

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Niles Daily Star

ONLINE EDITION

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Granholm urges veto override

Thursday, October 11, 2007 10:38 AM EDT

LANSING - Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm Wednesday joined U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, state legislative leaders, health care providers and advocates in urging the Michigan congressional delegation to be united in its support of Michigan's children by voting to override the president's veto of the Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Reauthorization Act of 2007.

Granholm said a united, bipartisan Michigan congressional delegation could help insure that the president's veto will be rejected and that more children are given important access to health care under the program.

"This legislation represents a promise to every Michigan child who needs a vaccination, insulin and other medical services," Granholm said. "It will insure that more of our state's neediest kids can be seen by a doctor and have access to medications and medical care. Every member of Congress, especially those from Michigan, should do the right thing and support Michigan's children by voting to override the president's veto."

Last week, President Bush vetoed a bipartisan bill that would have protected 55,000 Michigan children who are currently supported by this program every month.

The vetoed bill would provide the state with a 44-percent increase in funds, allowing Michigan to cover as many as 80,900 additional children.

At a roundtable discussion at the Ingham County Health Department, Granholm and Stabenow discussed the importance of the SCHIP program to Michigan's children.

While expressing disappointment over the president's veto, Granholm applauded members of the congressional delegation who voted for the legislation, including the following Republican members: U.S. Reps. Fred Upton, Vernon Ehlers and Candice S. Miller.

Granholm also recognized U.S. Rep. John Dingell and Sen. Stabenow, who played key roles in developing this legislation.

THE DAILY Reporter

Print this story

Walberg decries 'lies' in schip controversy

Print Page

By Roland Stoy-Staff writer

WASHINGTON — An increase in health insurance for uninsured children has become a political football, following a presidential veto last week of an additional \$35 billion for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

And while President George Bush in his weekly radio address last Saturday indicated that he is willing to increase funding for SCHIP above his proposal of an extra \$5 billion, those who are certain to vote on Oct. 18 to sustain his veto, including 7th District U.S. Rep. Tim Walberg, R-Tipton, have been under attack.

"Right now if you listen to a popular country radio station in south-central Michigan, you can hear advertisements spreading lies about my position on SCHIP," said Walberg in a press release this week. "The station selection for this ad seems appropriate for House Democrats, whose blatant twisting of the truth is fit for a remake of Garth Brooks' classic song 'Friends in Low Places' . . . House Democrats continue to mischaracterize Republican support of the SCHIP program, and would like you to believe that Republicans do not care about poor, needy kids."

Walberg has been adamantly opposed to the SCHIP increase from the beginning, when he characterized the bill as a "train wreck," that was not only irresponsible, but that courted more "socialized" medicine and would take away from seniors who receive Medicaid through private insurers.

The Associated Press said funds for the SCHIP increase would have come from higher taxes on tobacco.

Supporters of the increase in SCHIP funding, including Gov. Jennifer Granholm and state Democratic U.S. Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, say the increase will help reach families not at the poverty level but still unable to afford health insurance.

An override of the presidential veto is not expected to be possible in the House, although there is some Republican support for the SCHIP hike.

Said Stabenow, "Something is wrong in this country when hard-working families do not have access to affordable health care for their children. Since 1997, the Children's Health Insurance Program has provided coverage for over 6.6 million children of working families who are not eligible for Medicaid, but still unable to afford health insurance."

She said the bill as vetoed would have provided Michigan with \$211 million in funds next year for the 90,000 children currently eligible, but not enrolled.

Said Granholm, "Without this legislation (the SCHIP increase) and the resources that will come along with it, many Michigan children will go without the health care they need."

Walberg continued, "Democrats are using this smear campaign against Republicans to gain support for their tax-and-spend economic policies. Sadly, they are taking the focus away from where this debate should be: meeting the needs of children of low-income families."

The Los Angeles Times reported Bush as saying, in his weekly address, "If putting poor children first takes a little more than the 20 percent increase I have proposed in my budget

for SCHIP, I am willing to work with leaders in Congress to find the additional money.”

They said he offered no specifics on how much of an increase he is willing to consider.

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Wednesday, October 10, 2007

Granholt expected to endorse Clinton next week

Mark Hornbeck / Detroit News Lansing Bureau

LANSING -- In the wake of Democratic candidate defections from Michigan's Jan. 15 presidential primary, Gov. Jennifer Granholm said today she will endorse a candidate next week.

It's widely speculated that Granholm will back New York Sen. Hillary Clinton, but the governor and her aides would not confirm that.

"I'll be announcing on an endorsement next week," Granholm said following a news conference during which she urged Republican congressmen from Michigan to vote next week to override a presidential veto of a federal health insurance program for needy children.

Asked whether she would endorse Clinton, the governor said: "Suffice it to say I'm very disappointed in the candidates who have chosen to back out."

Clinton is the only major Democratic candidate who has opted to remain on the Democratic primary ballot here. Illinois Sen. Barack Obama, former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson and Delaware Sen. Joseph Biden said Tuesday they decided to withdraw to protect the Democratic National Committee schedule that maintains Iowa and New Hampshire as the early-bird states.

Ohio Rep. Dennis Kucinich also attempted to back out, but failed to file the proper paperwork, Secretary of State officials said.

Connecticut Sen. Chris Dodd and former Alaska Sen. Mike Gravel also will remain on the Democratic ballot. All nine Republican presidential hopefuls will be on the ballot.

Granholt added "I'm not ready to give up" on the early primary, because she still believes it helps draw attention to Michigan's economic plight.

On President Bush's veto of a bill to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program, Granholt said she and other legislative leaders and health care professionals are targeting four Republican congressmen to vote to override the veto when the matter comes up for a vote Oct. 18.

The lobby effort will focus on U.S. Reps. Joe Knollenberg of Bloomfield Hills, Mike Rogers of Brighton, Peter Hoekstra of Holland and Tim Walberg of Tipton, Granholt said. Reps. Vern Ehlers of Grand Rapids, Fred Upton of St. Joseph and Candice Miller of Harrison Township have said they're committed to overriding the veto. And Granholt aides said Reps. Thaddeus McCotter of Livonia and Dave Camp of Midland are considered

"This is a call for action to urge members of Congress in Michigan to override President Bush's veto," she said, adding that the federal program would cover an additional 80,900 children in the state from working families that earn too much annual income to qualify for Medicaid -- up to \$41,000 for a family of four. The state currently has 55,000 children covered by the program.

Bush has said he vetoed the bill because it expands the program to cover some adults and children from middle-class families and is a government intrusion into private insurance markets.

"This is about supporting working families that want to know at least the kids are covered with health insurance," said U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow.

You can reach Mark Hornbeck at (313) 222-2470 or mhornbeck@detnews.com.

LETTERS

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

Vote out Republicans who voted against kids

Reps. Thaddeus McCotter, Mike Rogers, Joe Knollenberg and Peter Hoekstra - Michigan's rubber-stamp Republicans in Congress - voted against the State Children's Health Insurance Program. That's right, they once again obeyed their amoral leaders and voted to deny health care to millions of underprivileged American children.

Even Sen. Orrin Hatch was willing to go public and challenge George Bush's false argument. This bill will not move already insured children to the government plan, as President Bush has tried to convince us.

But Michigan's shameful Republican representatives prefer to send our tax dollars to destroy lives in Iraq rather than care for the lives of the neediest in this country. Another war-funding bill will soon be presented. Let's see how much of our hard-earned tax dollars they send to Blackwater and Halliburton, while simultaneously denying health care to poor, sick children. Of course, this issue does not personally touch Congress members or their families. They voted themselves totally free health care, courtesy of you and me, Mr. and Mrs. Sucker. For life.

I sincerely hope that Michigan has had enough of these compassionate conservatives. November 2008 elections are just around the corner and we will then have the opportunity to remove these cold, uncaring men from our payroll.

Mary Ann Beaser, Plymouth



Patients find free help at Allegan County clinic

Thursday, October 11, 2007

By Alison Black

Press News Service

ALLEGAN -- When Otsego resident and former 911 worker Lucy Sweet lost her job of 10 years in 2006, she also lost her health benefits.

Sweet is among Allegan County's 11,000 individuals -- about 10 percent of the population -- who lack health insurance, jobless or not.

After months of doing without blood-pressure medication because she could not afford it, Sweet found her way "just in time" to the Seeds of Grace health clinic -- the only free clinic of its kind in Allegan County.

"I thank God because I had nowhere else to go, and I was really needing to see someone," said Sweet, who left with a \$4 prescription order in hand.

Clinic founders Earl and Judy Kranz opened Seeds of Grace in June and serve about 20 patients each Thursday at the clinic, housed at the Allegan County Community Center.

Many patients come from as far as Douglas and Fennville for services ordinarily provided by primary-care physicians.

Diabetes classes, blood-pressure checks and minor surgeries such as mole and ingrown-toenail removals are available on site and free. Free lab work and X-rays also are available through a partnership with Allegan General Hospital.

Perrigo Co. donates over-the-counter medicines and several local hospitals donate pharmaceutical samples. The clinic also assists patients, who demonstrate financial need, with paperwork that can be submitted to drug companies for free medication.

The only expenses patients might incur are \$4 prescriptions that can be filled at Wal-Mart for medications the clinic may not have immediately available in its pharmacy.

"People just don't realize how many people out there need help," said Judy Kranz, a licensed nurse who wanted to do something for the local homeless population after the county's only homeless shelter closed its doors a few years ago.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' studies also show the county is a medically underserved area.

"It's really needed," Kathy Younkers-Wright, a health educator with the Allegan County Health Department, said of the free clinic.

They had been interested in building a homeless shelter for women and children in the area. That's still on the way.

But his wife suggested starting the clinic in the meantime.

The Kranzes, aided by clinical director Linda Misak, a registered nurse with 25 years of experience in local

emergency rooms, recruited area medical personnel to volunteer at the clinic.

The couple also convinced several hospitals and businesses to donate thousands of dollars' worth of equipment.

"We have had an outpouring, and it's still coming," said Misak, gesturing at a pair of recently donated dentist's chairs to be used in a free dental operation the Kranzes hope to open by next year.

Even with the contributions and donations of companies and individuals, Seeds of Grace "desperately" needs more medications, donations and volunteers to stay afloat, Misak said.

In addition, the clinic is facing an increase in rent.

"We'll just have to figure out a way to take this thing one day at a time," Misak said.

The Kranzes are doing a lot of that these days.

Earlier this year, the family car was stolen while they were doing missionary work in Mississippi. In April, their Plainwell home burned to the ground.

The Kranzes' three children, Brandy, Jack and David, all volunteer at the clinic.

"We will treat every person that comes through that door with dignity because everybody deserves it," said Earl Kranz.

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Food drive Saturday

Thursday, October 11, 2007

GRAND RAPIDS -- More than 1,700 volunteers are expected to collect 100 tons in food donations Saturday in Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Wyoming and Walker during the 11th Annual ACCESS County Wide Food Drive. Food also can be donated at any Kent County D&W or Family Fare grocery store. Praise rallies at 9 a.m. in five areas of the city will precede the collections. Items that are most needed: peanut butter, tuna, pasta products, soup, canned fruit and vegetables, soap, toothpaste, shampoo and diapers.

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